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A C H A R G E

DELIVERED AT VISITATIONS

OF THE

CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF YORK,

Held at Newmarket, on Thursday, September 6; at Chippawa, Wednesday, September 12; at Hamilton, Friday, September 14; at Woodstock, Tuesday, September 18; at London, Thursday, September 20; and at Chatham, Tuesday, Sept. 25.

BY

THE VENERABLE A. N. BETHUNE, D. D.

ARCHDEACON OF YORK.

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A CHARGE

Addressed to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of York, at Visitations of the Clergy and Churchwardens of that Archdeaconry, held at Newmarket on Thursday, Sept. 6; at Chippawa, Wednesday, Sept. 12; at Hamilton, Friday, Sept. 14; at Woodstock, Tuesday, Sept. 18; at London, Thursday, Sept. 20, and at Chatham, Tuesday, Sept. 25, 1849, by the VENERABLE A. N. BETHUNE, D.D., Archdeacon of York.

REVEREND BRETHREN,—

The course of duty affords me the gratification of meeting you on this occasion, although I withhold from myself the satisfaction of addressing at once the whole of the Clergy of this Archdeaconry,—feeling it advisable to convene portions of them at such different points as may best consist with their convenience and the general good of the Church.

Since my appointment to this Archdeaconry, in the year 1847, I have made it a business, at such times as other engagements would allow, to visit every parish or mission, and nearly every station where Divine Service is performed, within its limits,—a part of duty which I considered it necessary to discharge, in order that I might judge, by personal inspection, of the condition of each, and thus offer more advantageously such suggestions for the effecting of improvements, or the correction of defects, as circumstances might point out.

In the execution of this duty, involving, of necessity, the consumption of much time, and not a little labour and anxiety,—as, in all the journeys it required, nearly 4000 miles had to be travelled in fulfilling it,—I have been well repaid by the accurate information upon the state of this portion of the Diocese, which I have thus been enabled to acquire. And here I cannot refrain from expressing my warm acknowledgments for the uniform kindness and hospitality which, in the course of these visits, I have experienced both from the Clergy and Laity, and for the frank and fraternal manner in which my official inquiries have been met. After the information thus obtained in detail, you will concur with me in the benefit of throwing into a condensed form the suggestions and counsels which have

been, from time to time, framed upon it,—that we may act as a body upon our several duties, and, by a general consideration of them on the part of both Clergy and Laity, achieve the advantages of united deliberation and united action.

Our contemplations of the secular condition of the Church will embrace two leading subjects of consideration, viz., of Local and of General, or, as they may be termed, Catholic objects.

I. Those which are Local, and which must first engage our consideration, branch out, as will be expected, into several distinct heads :

I. THE BUILDING OF CHURCHES.

Wherever a congregation has been formed, and can be habitually served, it will be most desirable to secure, as early as possible, the erection of a Church. To a large extent, in a new country, we avail ourselves of school-houses for Divine Service : in our necessity we should be thankful for this resource, but it is one which, like the emergency, should be regarded only as temporary, and to be superseded, as soon as possible, by the edifice specially set apart for sacred uses. There is something congenial to the religious mind in this special consecration, and something very abhorrent to it in the occasional employment for holy purposes of that which is perhaps habitually allotted to common uses. The tone of reverential feeling is, of necessity, much impaired by the absence of its appropriate symbols ; and though the fervour of genuine devotion may be felt in the school-house or private abode, the proprieties of public worship cannot be so easily maintained in a common or unconsecrated edifice.

There would be little difficulty, generally, in the way of the accomplishment of this object, where a right religious feeling prevails, and such a feeling is, through God's blessing, a usual result of the stated employment of the means of grace. That correct and earnest tone of religious feeling would almost spontaneously urge to a concentration of the means and energies of a people ; and where this is done, there can be little doubt of success. Persons have only, as a community, to exert the skill and industry which they so usually employ, as individuals, in securing to themselves a comfortable residence, and even those ornaments and elegancies which improvement in worldly fortune so generally induces them to supply. Let the same feeling, deepened and sanctified, animate Christians in contemplating their obligation to erect and adorn the house of God ; let the "children of light," in this instance, exhibit the prudence and zeal which characterize the "children of this world." If this were done, we should have fewer complaints of the difficulty, much less of the impossibility, of erecting a becoming edifice of prayer : what one, for individual satisfaction or comfort, is enabled

to effect for himself, a whole community, without any extraordinary self-denial or serious self-deprivation, can surely accomplish. In this way, in the prosperous and populous city,—in the rising town or village,—we should discern the sanctuary of God, standing out, in its proportions and adornments, pre-eminent amongst the mere structures of the world. In like proportion the rural population would manifest their handiwork and their liberality; and even amongst the struggling settlers of the newly cleared township, the building specially set apart for the service of God, though of rude construction, would shew, in its dimensions and in the care of its workmanship, a superiority over at least the best log dwelling in the wilderness.

And let us not be frowned away from a right appreciation of this duty, by the cold philosophic contempt which is sometimes expressed for what some are pleased to term these trappings of devotion—these gorgeous adornments of the simple duty of our Maker's praise. The whole handiwork of the adorable Architect of the universe proves that to His immeasurable and inconceivable Spirit, harmony and order are things consentaneous and delightful. If we look at the embroidery of the flowers, which are His workmanship, or at the texture of the insect's wing, which owns the cunning of His hand, we shall be justified in throwing the fulness of our architectural skill into the edifices which are raised to His honour.

All the reasons I have stated will have their weight in effecting repairs where they are needed, and in not suffering dilapidations from time, or injuries from accident, to evince, by our neglect of them, an indifference to the honour and reverence which is due from us to the sanctuary of the Most High.

2. THE PROVIDING OF THINGS NECESSARY FOR THE BECOMING PERFORMANCE OF DIVINE SERVICE.

The Apostle's command,—“Let all things be done decently and in order,” will be a general direction in this duty: what is applied to holy uses should have its peculiar adaptation to that end. And here I may speak first of Church vestments, or rather of that vestment which is, in a singular degree, the becoming garb of the minister of God in the sanctuary. This—the Surplice—should be furnished by the parishioners; and in churches in towns and villages, it would be always desirable that there should be two. A good rule would be, to require also a surplice from the congregations ministered to in out stations, as well as a Bible and Prayer Book of convenient size.

Connected closely with this, is the supply of the appropriate liner coverings for the Lord's Table,—now easily procured of an appropriate pattern, and which, if so procured, would exclude the

use of that which is employed for ordinary or secular purposes. The same consideration will apply to the procuring of an appropriate service of Communion Plate and a Font,—the means for a right administration of the two Sacraments of the Church; where a sense of duty in holy things would forbid the employment of vessels adapted to the common uses and conveniences of life. The emblematic washing of water,—the divinely-appointed pledge of the new birth,—should have its peculiar “laver,” as doubtless was the case in the Apostles’ times; and the bread and wine, which represent Christ’s spiritual presence in the feast, should have a receptacle different from that used for the eating and drinking of ordinary life. We should otherwise be rendering the Lord’s house a common habitation, and confounding the appropriate emblems and symbols of Divine things with what is adapted to the business or pastimes of the world. Such things ought not to be; Christian reverence would cause us to shrink from the profanation.

The sound of the “Church-going Bell” is one to almost every heart of happy associations; and its music, though rude and simple, affects with a consolatory feeling many who have left their fatherland, and who, in a distant clime, look for their best consolation from the services of religion. To warn of the hours of prayer, is one of its simplest uses; but we shall not allow ourselves, at the same time, to overlook the benefit of the monitions it affords on occasions of spiritual gladness or sorrow. It is, in short, an appendage to a church which many ancient and holy feelings would constrain us to supply.

And who, in the house of God, can be insensible to the charm of the strain of praise, mingling, in its appropriate place, with the voice of supplication and intercession? The sound of many voices speaking out the joy and gratitude of a redeemed soul, is revealed as the employment of just spirits made perfect, and of the Cherubim and Seraphim, in heaven; and on earth we feel, in the devout performance of that duty of thankfulness, a foretaste of the coming bliss in the same bright world of peace and love. The sound of many voices expressing their thankful praises to their Maker and Redeemer, is helped, we must all feel, by the Church’s most appropriate instrument of music, the Organ. All congregations, it is true, are not so circumstanced as to provide that pleasing accompaniment of Divine worship; but I need scarcely press, what is so spontaneously felt, the benefit of supplying it as soon as it can be done.

3. THE ENLARGEMENT OF CHURCHES, WHEN NECESSARY.

When I said that the religious edifice, emphatically termed the House of Prayer, should be such, in external appearance and internal adorning, as to exhibit, if we may say so, a standing

memorial of the religious taste and spirit of the people, I am far from meaning to urge an expenditure inconsistent with their well-considered means. On the contrary, I should strongly press the avoiding of that serious impediment to the spiritual welfare of a congregation,—the incumbrance of a heavy debt upon their church. This is too often carelessly, and even recklessly, incurred,—not so much always from the actual want of means, as because there has been some deficiency in management,—a hasty forming of plans, without ensuring the combination of energies and resources that might carry them through. Although, then, in a new country like this, where the population may be expected to increase from other than natural causes,—where, indeed, the ever-flowing tide of emigration is rapidly augmenting the number of our people,—it would not be wise to limit the church accommodation to the present demand, but to provide for the probable wants of some years to come, it would, nevertheless, be better to commence with contracted dimensions and on an inferior scale, rather than embark in expenses which there is but a doubtful prospect of meeting. It would be prudent, however, in such cases, so to construct our churches that they should admit of enlargement, without doing violence to the proportions or impairing the symmetry of the whole.

Frequently we find it necessary to enlarge our church accommodation in a place where the church itself is so inferior a building that it is hardly worth while to add to it; and at the same time difficulty is experienced in erecting an entirely new church. Here it is quite possible, as experience in many cases testifies, to combine increase of accommodation with the actual commencement of a new church. A new front, or a new chancel, may be added in strict connexion with the plan of a new church on a larger and improved scale; and that addition may be easily made to afford, for the present, an additional number of sittings: in time, as means increase and wants become pressing, the enlargement may be extended on the same plan, and at last an entirely new church may be completed.

In this way, many of the noblest ecclesiastical structures of our fatherland have been brought to completion: they were commenced and proceeded with, by small beginnings, in faith; and what one generation left incomplete, another took up and carried on. The work was for posterity not less than for the present generation: and they who did a little in their day, felt cheered in the thought, that in this work of piety they were linked in sympathy and action with those coming after them, and that unity was maintained in their common end of glorifying God.

This unfinished church will be regarded, indeed, as a trust committed from the father to the child; and the latter will not feel

that he has walked in the steps of his parent, if he lend not a helping hand to build up the sanctuary. Moreover, this very aspect of an unfinished work is a sort of rebuke upon generations as they pass: it is to them a monition of a great enterprise to be completed; and every year of inaction bringing with it its reproof, they will, from this standing memorial of a high duty to be performed, be urged to its accomplishment.

4. CHURCH REVENUE.

We come next to the important subject of Church revenue; and here, in referring to what upon this continent is made to form an important source of such revenue, I should be led into a consideration of the difficult and much agitated question of Pews. But, from the acknowledged difficulties which beset this question, and because any view we may take of it must be modified, in a large degree, by local circumstances, I feel it to be desirable, for the present at least, to abstain from any particular notice of the principle involved in that question. I shall content myself, therefore, with deliberating upon facts as they exist, in this case.

The possession of a pew in a church implies the possession of a certain exclusive privilege; and this kind of privilege, if we consult the permanent benefit of a parish or congregation, should be curbed as much as possible. The custom of alienating pews from the corporate tenure of the church, by selling them, should, in my judgment, be avoided as far as practicable. The church should be the owners of them, and hold them merely as a property to lease; in no case for sale. The Church, in this way, retains her legitimate voice in their appropriation, and can exercise a judgment in occasionally changing the occupation of them; a power which it is important she should keep in her hands, because frequently great detriment is experienced from the impossibility of assuming and appropriating pews which the possessors only rarely, and perhaps never, occupy; whereas if they were but leased, the Vestry could change the occupants as circumstances might require. And it would be found advantageous to make such changes in all cases where pews are not *habitually* occupied,—reasonable notice being first given to the parties in possession.

Where people desire the exclusive privilege of pews, or sittings, in a church, they should be willing, as in the case of every other luxury, to give a suitable remuneration for it; and on this account, a due consideration should be given to the amount of rent that is imposed. It might be found an equitable rule to value the sittings in a church according to the cost of the edifice; for that, in general, is found to bear a fair proportion to the means of the congregation. In a church worth £1000, ten shillings per annum for each sitting would be a reasonable charge, and certainly it ought

not to be lower. Supposing, then, a church of that cost to contain 400 sittings, and that one-third was set apart as free, the residue, if leased even on those moderate terms, would yield a revenue (allowing for occasional losses) of fully £100 per annum.

Another very ancient and legitimate, because Scriptural, source of Church revenue, is from alms and offerings on the Lord's Day, as appointed in the Book of Common Prayer. This unostentatious, and as we may hope, sanctified method of bestowing our bounty for purposes of piety and charity, must recommend itself to every Christian heart; and feeling it a duty thus to bestow out of what God has given us, we shall feel it equally a duty to give liberally. In this way, too, *all* have the opportunity of contributing, according to their ability, to the Lord's service: the rich and the poor can jointly throw in their offerings; and the left hand knows not what the right hand doeth, in this unobtrusive work of love. A congregation of the size just mentioned,—400 persons,—if animated by a right Christian spirit, might fairly be reckoned upon for £100 per annum from the Offertory collections: it would be little more than a penny a week from each.

Taking, then, these two sources of revenue into computation, the amount, as a general rule, might be made up from thence, which would be required on the part of the people towards the stipend of the clergyman. After making the necessary appropriations to other church purposes, £100 per annum at the least could be spared for this object; and this would be a better method of meeting the obligation than by instituting a subscription-list, with all the labour, vexation, and uncertainty with which that is found too generally to be accompanied. This, I repeat, would be a more satisfactory method of attaining this object; but it cannot always perhaps be secured in that way. An annual subscription, therefore, might be instituted to meet the *deficiency*; though to supply this, the ancient Church rule of Easter or Christmas offerings, specially made for this purpose, would be found much more satisfactory.

There are cases, however,—those especially of rural congregations, where pew-rents are small, or perhaps do not exist at all,—in which the method just stated of securing the required share of the stipend of the Minister would be found impracticable. Here, then, we must reverse our plan,—make the subscription-list the main dependence,—and supply deficiencies from the pew-rents, (if they exist,) and the Offertory Fund. This plan might be found to work more advantageously in rural congregations, because much could be contributed in produce; a mode of contribution which, with a very little previous arrangement, might be turned to much better account than has heretofore been the case.

I have assumed, my brethren, as you will perceive, the payment of a portion of the Minister's maintenance by the people whom he serves, as an established rule and indispensable obligation; for, while our own Christian feelings will assent to its propriety and justice, circumstances themselves imperatively demand its application.

I need not enter here into the history of the question, the agitation of which has resulted in the loss of so large a share of the ecclesiastical property bestowed by the best of Kings upon the Church in this Province: it is enough for us without indulging in vain repinings or useless regrets, to contemplate the irreversible result and to make the most of what is left. What is left, as all must be aware, can meet but a small share of the maintenance of the Church in this Diocese; and if its valued ministrations are to be secured, it must be through the exercise of a right Christian zeal and self-denial on the part of our people generally. In view of this necessity, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts,—a Society ever to be spoken of and remembered by us with gratitude and affection,—as Trustees, under an Imperial enactment, of that portion of the Clergy Reserve Fund which is commonly called the Surplus Fund, (that is, over and above what is required to meet the pledge of Government in support of our Ecclesiastical Establishment as it existed in 1833),—have published a regulation that no clergyman shall, in future, receive a stipend from that Fund larger than may be guaranteed annually by the congregation amongst whom he ministers: in other words, the payments on both sides shall be equal,—with a limitation, of course, on the part of the Society, which need not apply to the congregations coming under that regulation. From the equitableness of this arrangement, as a general rule, we can hardly allow ourselves to dissent. There will be cases in which a sound discretion, consulting for the good of the Church, would desire some modification of that rule; but the general principle, that the people should bear a direct share in the maintenance of their minister, we must all concur in as just and beneficial.

In contemplating our obligations in this particular, we are called upon to take the highest ground. Supposing that every acre of the Clergy Reserves remained to us, we should not even then, deem ourselves, as individual Christians, exempt from the duty of contributing directly to the support of religion. God himself has laid down the rule of action for us in his holy word; and that rule we cannot regard otherwise than as eternally binding upon mankind. For purposes of piety and charity, one-tenth of their substance is claimed by Him: it was so under the law: there has

been no prohibition or contravention of the rule under the Gospel; and the first Christians, as have succeeding Christians, interpreting it as of perpetual obligation, have recognized and acted upon it as a solemn religious duty. It stands in the light of a sacred contract on our part,—a condition and acknowledgement of the gifts which God, in his providence, bestows upon us: and if the debt be not paid,—if this fair share of our means and earnings be not given to God's cause, our firm conviction should be that, sooner or later, in the righteous workings of his providence, that amount will be taken from us. Either we, or those that come after us, will be made to feel that God has been "robbed in tithes and offerings." (Malachi iii. 8.)

The allotment of land, from the public property of a country, for the maintenance of the ministry, constitutes, therefore, no release to us as individual Christians from this ever-standing obligation: that allotment should be regarded as emphatically the heritage of the poor scattered throughout the land; so that this payment for God's cause must, in some shape or other, come directly from ourselves. It may be, then, in very mercy to His people, that He has allowed a portion of that patrimony to be alienated from them,—that there may exist, as it were, a compulsory reason for their personally discharging that share of this religious debt, which they might be induced to withhold if a pressing necessity for its payment did not appear to exist.

It would exhibit, indeed, a sad picture of spiritual barrenness, if a people were content to see their clergyman paid from resources which they helped not to supply; if they enjoyed every religious privilege and ordinance without sharing in the charge of maintaining them. I fully believe that there can be no spiritual prosperity where this disposition is wanting; for its very element,—the nutriment of it, as we may say, manifested in a pious mind and willing heart,—is absent. Nor do I feel that I am going too far in saying that there will be no *temporal* prosperity to the people who neglect this duty. The Jews were transported to Babylon as captives, that the land, stripped of its inhabitants, might enjoy of necessity that sabbatical repose which the covetousness of the people,—another form of idolatry,—withheld them from allowing to it. From this, Christians, who are bound to serve God at least as much as Jews may learn a lesson; and, in the solemn assurance that God's threatenings as well as His promises will be fulfilled, they should avoid the peril and the penalty of a similar disobedience.

5. PARSONAGE HOUSES.

I cannot lay too much stress upon the benefit of providing Parsonage Houses in the several parishes, as speedily as possible. A comfortable Parsonage gives to a parish an aspect of settlement and

stability; while, in the absence of a dwelling specially provided for the clergyman, we should be led to conclude that his appointment there was not considered a privilege designed to be permanent or successive. Moreover, a residence for the Clergyman, by the saving of rent, is just so much added to his income; or, at least, it removes from the congregation the burden of that annual charge. Besides, in many country parishes, and even in small towns and villages, it is often found impossible to procure any thing like a comfortable dwelling; nor is the Incumbent sure of being able permanently to retain the house he may hold on lease. There is always, too, on the part of landlords, in rural districts especially where the application for residences is unfrequent, a great repugnance to keep leased houses in repair; while neither the clergyman nor his people feel any encouragement to assume that expense themselves.

In consequence of these difficulties, the clergyman, on entering a parish, is frequently induced to provide a house for himself, either by purchasing or building a suitable residence; with the laudable feeling, that it will be so much real property for his family afterwards. Although this is a natural and often a necessary step, experience proves, in many cases, that it is not a prudent one. Few clergymen can spare so much from their means as such an acquisition of property requires; and if a debt be incurred in obtaining it, it is seldom that, with a slender stipend, its pressure can be got rid of. The annual amount of the interest of its cost is, at all events, virtually subtracted from his income.

Where a clergyman has, under such circumstances, built or purchased a house for himself, it would be desirable, in my judgment,—if he has no objection himself to the arrangement,—that the parish should become the purchasers of it; and this transfer might generally be effected on terms mutually accommodating.—The possession of such a property by a clergyman, notwithstanding the prospective advantages connected with it, would generally be found an incumbrance in case of his desire to remove to another parish. Nor need the laudable wish he entertains of securing to his family a residence after his removal from his labours by death, prove an obstacle to the arrangement which I recommend; because, in many instances, a residence elsewhere, on private grounds of convenience, would be desired by them; and, if not, a smaller dwelling would, under the change of circumstances, generally be sought for.

6. CHURCH-YARDS.

The reverence which is so universally felt for the consecrated receptacle of the dead, will naturally prompt a becoming care of the church-yard,—especially its protection, by a sufficient fence or wall,

from unseemly depredations. In towns of any considerable size, it would be wise to provide in time a cemetery at a convenient distance beyond its limits.

I would press here the recommendation to have burying-grounds regularly laid out in lots of convenient size, that the several families of parishioners might have their own allotments; and as none can be more interested than themselves in keeping the church-yard fences, &c., in repair, the simplest means of securing this would be, at the first assignment of a lot therein, to require a small payment (such as the Vestry might agree upon), and a small annual or occasional assessment besides, as circumstances might call for its application.

7. INSURANCE OF CHURCHES AND PARSONAGES.

The precaution here recommended is now so generally adopted, that little need be said upon this head. The greatest vigilance and care cannot always protect us against accidents by fire; and when these occur in the case of our churches or parsonages, we should feel much self-condemnation if we had neglected the usual means,—which now in so many shapes are afforded,—of being assured against them.

II. I come now to the second proposed head of consideration,—General or Catholic objects, as distinguished from such as are merely local.

Here, my Brethren, I must be permitted to call attention to the duty of a vigorous and systematic maintenance of the *Church Society*, established a few years ago, under auspices so favourable, in our Diocese. And I do so here, on account of that prominent and kindly feature in its character, the Catholic spirit which marks its constitution and its working,—the inherent power it exerts of promoting unity amongst the members of our holy communion,—of linking Churchmen together, however distant and separated, in that sympathy and in those offices of charity which best attest the brotherhood of the whole.

We must all feel that our Christian charity is not to be limited to the spot in which we live, or bounded by the space in which our property may lie; but that it must extend to those also with whom we cannot hold direct intercourse or personal communion. We are to testify, by acts which will be visible and felt, that there is a sympathy between the members of the Church everywhere,—that there is a circulation, as it were, of Christian charity and graces,—that the current of Gospel love has free course through the whole body of the household of faith,—that by this interchange of kindly offices and feelings, we are practically as well as relatively one.

The poor, whether in a spiritual or temporal view, wheresoever placed, have a claim upon their better-provided brethren; and by

our support of an Institution which is so Catholic in its objects, we show that this claim is allowed. The needy emigrant, in the township just cleared, looks to his more favoured brethren for aid to supply to him the ministrations of religion; and none, so circumstanced as to have enough and to spare, are permitted to hear unmoved the appeal, "Come over and help us."

In the persuasion that such is our duty, we should rejoice that channels are opened to us and an organization effected, by which our Catholic sympathies may have exercise and expansion with some certainty of positive and beneficial results. These in the Church Society are promised, and the experience of a few years tells us how satisfactorily they have been realized.

1. By contributing one-fourth of the resources raised under that organization to the Parent Society,—the almoner of our liberality for the common good,—we are benefitting our brethren throughout the Diocese generally. We supply the means of providing for them the Bible and the Prayer Book, and also of maintaining, in part at least, the Travelling or Resident Missionary.

2. By the several District Branches aiding in the same objects within the bounds of such Districts,—in distributing religious publications, and furnishing a portion of the stipend of the Travelling Missionary,—we, as members of those Branch Associations, are carrying out the same ends as the Parent Society, though within a narrower sphere, and dispensing to others those spiritual blessings which it is our own privilege to enjoy.

3. The same principle is carried out in a judicious appropriation of the residue of the funds applicable, by the constitution, to local purposes. The appropriation of some portion of it to the purchase of a glebe lot, the erection of a parsonage, or the building or endowing of a parochial school, is legitimately within those Catholic or more diffused objects. It is a looking off from ourselves to those that come after us, and effecting through our bounty the permanent religious benefit of posterity. It would, in my judgment, be most desirable that the portion of funds placed at the disposal of the Parochial Associations should be expended upon objects of that character,—that the appropriations thus made should be visible in their results to coming generations. And here I am happy to adduce an extract from the last Report of the Church Society, closely in unison with these suggestions:—"It is hoped that the unendowed Mission will use every exertion to provide for themselves landed endowments, whilst wild lands can be procured at so small a cost, and on such easy terms. If each parish would contribute £10 per annum for ten years, a lot of 200 acres could be procured, which might be leased on liberal terms; and at the expiration of only a few years would be so much improved in value, that

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it would be capable of producing an income: so that by using a little forethought now to procure land, even if distant from the church which it is intended to endow, the time would soon come when such lands might be exchanged for a farm in the immediate vicinity. Several Parochial Associations in the Diocese have done this, and there is little doubt but that wherever the plan is adopted by men really in earnest, it will be carried into effectual operation."* By such a course of action, we are subserving the great and useful principle of union and communion, interwoven in the very design of the Church Society; connecting, as it were, generations together; and causing our children and children's children to contemplate, with a grateful piety and Christian emulation, the monuments of faith and love bequeathed to them by their fathers.

III. I come, lastly, to what in an Address like the present I should naturally be expected to revert to, and which the presence of not a few of our lay brethren on the present occasion, renders it more proper to notice: I mean—

THE DUTIES OF CHURCHWARDENS.

But upon this I feel myself called upon to be brief. The enumeration of the duties and powers of Churchwardens, in detail, would almost of itself, occupy the limits of an ordinary Charge; and it may be advisable, at some future period,—if such, in the good Providence of God should be permitted,—to enter with some minuteness into that subject. At present, I can advert but cursorily to a few points connected with that important class of Church officers.

And, first, I would say that theirs is a duty from which no competent or influential layman should allow himself to shrink. We are stewards, all of us, of the manifold grace of God, comprehending the boundlessness of His gifts, both temporal and spiritual; and here the laity, as well as the clergy, have their share of the responsibility: the one, as well as the other, must use the talents entrusted to them for the spiritual as well as temporal good of their brethren. There are, all must perceive, many portions of duty connected with the due administration of the Word and ordinances,—in the decent and orderly employment of what marks our fellowship as well as common worship, in which the clergy must have the co-operation of laical help: and this can only be ensured by special appointments to special and classified duties.

There is, too, a leading feature in the very constitution of the visible Church, which shews the appropriateness and importance of this office. The Church is composed of the whole body of believers,—of all the baptized, of all who name the name of Christ. The

* This quotation has been added since the delivery of the Charge.

clergy, one class of this great body, have a special office assigned to them; by a distinct and regularly transmitted commission, they are entrusted with executive duties of a spiritual character, the efficacy of which, amongst other causes, must be considered to depend upon the validity of the commission by which they are exercised. Closely connected with the clergy in privilege, hope, and responsibility, are the rest of the great body of believers; these, too, with their appropriate work in the Church of God,—with an obligation, differing only in kind, to serve and glorify their Maker and Redeemer. If the leading privilege of the Church of Christ be the bringing us into communion and fellowship with Him through his appointed ordinances; if the channel of the communication of the gifts purchased for us, be the Church and her Divine appointments; if our spiritual growth, not to speak alone of our spiritual existence, be dependent upon our union with Christ through this agency and means; then we shall feel how much alike we are in our responsibilities, as well as in our privileges and hopes. And if the members of the Church at large,—the laity, as they may be distinctively termed,—have thus their obligation to serve the Lord in their place in his household; and if to do so effectually, with that order and fitness which his own appointments require, organization and arrangement is necessary; we shall see and feel how completely the establishment of Churchwardens meets that requirement,—how happily it effects the due connexion between ministers and people in the common duty of honouring and serving God. We cannot, therefore, resist the conviction that the delegation of this office, in turn, to competent individuals amongst the laity, will be felt as an honour and a distinction, rather than a burden; we shall believe that it will be welcomed as a means for the employment of a great trust committed to every member of the Church of God, rather than be regarded as a troublesome interference with the common engagements of the world.

Here too, perhaps, we should, as a duty to them, as well as a benefit to the Church at large, preserve a rotation in their appointment, and as a general rule, at least, limit their tenure of office to two years. This would be gradually diffusing, through the body of the parishioners, that deeper interest in ecclesiastical affairs, which the exercise of a public and special office connected with them must be supposed to beget.

But, in contemplating the benefit and the duties of Churchwardens, we shall more clearly understand them if we look back to the various points connected with the temporal circumstances of the Church which we have just been reviewing. The erection of a church,—its enlargement or adorning,—the providing it with what is seemly and necessary for public worship,—the maintenance of the

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minister, and the carrying out those Catholic objects which we are every one of us bound to advance,—these it would be impossible in any parish to effect, without the co-operation and action of the laity; and this co-operation, we can understand, could not be efficiently brought to bear, unless through one or more individuals specially delegated to act on their behalf. The body of believers, in their direct connexion with and duty to the visible Church, must have their representatives or delegates; and these are satisfactorily realized in the persons of Churchwardens. If they will work heartily in this cause, and labour with a true Christian zeal, to carry out these ends and purposes, we may with God's blessing look for the most prosperous results; but without that earnest co-operation, in all the temporal circumstances of the Church,—and spiritual advancement is much connected with them,—our progress will be proportionately slow. Yet, in the present day of keen speculation and untiring energy, we shall not, my brethren, let the world have all the advantage: we shall apply some share of its wisdom and toil to the harvest of souls and the kingdom of grace: we shall appropriate some portion of those talents which the world, in its peculiar vocations, so much applauds, to the realization of blessings which are heavenly and unchanging. The "mammon of unrighteousness" shall not be suffered to engross all the skill and energy of our talents as stewards; but our powers and our fidelity will be shown as much, at least, in the diffusion of the truth and the spread of holiness of life. If the world's commendations can affect us, and the capricious breath of human praise can impel us to higher efforts in the mere cause of the world, how much more should we be influenced by the anticipation of this welcome, and, above all, by the consequences of its loss—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

But the great secret of success rests, under God, in an adherence to principle. While we work, we may work erroneously; and the superstructure upon which pains and skill have been lavished, may, from want of foundation, suddenly fall and be destroyed. We must strive to be clear in our conceptions of the Church of Christ, and courageous in maintaining them; for to a neglect of this is owing, we must feel, much of the perilous wanderings of the times, and the overturning of many high spiritual enterprises. The temper of the day is calculated to bring every thing under the philosophising and speculative disputations of mere human reason and predilection.—Even religion has come to be treated as a speculation—bent and moulded, by men's perverse passions, to subserve personal or party interests. Adherence to the Church of Christ, from the depraved system of belief and action so much cherished, becomes in too many

cases a question of expediency. The time, the occasion, the company,—popularity, interest,—can shift it in an instant.

The Churchman here has doubtless his trials and temptations. The strength and consolidation and long endurance of many of the false systems that have been set up,—an erroneous creed with many followers,—an unscriptural Church polity, with numerous adherents,—are formidable things even for the consistent believer's discreet dealing. Yet no show of vigour, and power, and influence, can change the character of right and wrong; and the conscientious member of the Church of the living God must look off from the green and flourishing erections of man's device and cunning to the "building fitly framed together," which is the Church of the Lord's own construction; and he must adhere to this as the only sure depository of the promises and presence of the Lord.

That we have no right to trifle with the truth, or deal presumptuously with any of the Divine revelations, is a consideration which alone should keep us close in our allegiance to the Church of our fathers; but we can further commend an adherence to this high principle on grounds connected with practical duty. Where there is a loose foundation, there will be a tottering superstructure; where there is no root of conviction, there will be no settlement or consistency in the Christian life; where, in such high concerns, there is a wavering and capricious temper, there will be the absence of vital and abiding piety. A religion like this cannot stand the test either of the sunshine or the storm. When the light of prosperity blazes out, the feeble plant is scorched and withered; while the superscription of "the world and the flesh" is stamped, in characters which all may read upon the brow of this their devotee. And in the day of darkness and adversity, there is sullenness and fretfulness,—a discontent with and arraigning of the Divine Providence,—and too natural a sliding, at last, into scepticism and infidelity.

But in building upon, and in working by, the principles in which as Churchmen we are trained, I use no extravagant language in saying, we build upon a rock. Guided by Divine revelation, and not by man's inventions, we are out of the reach of the fluctuations of human pride and passion. We may have our dark days, our seasons of trial, mercifully interposed amidst brighter prospects; but we labour in confidence—we toil on in security. Resting on a sound foundation, and directing our efforts by a right standard, we can heartily bid one another "God speed;" in the contemplation of all our designs and enterprises of piety and charity, we can say in faith and hope—"This work goeth fast on and prospereth in our hands." (Ezra v. 8.)

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